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## **Obey questions Afghan war, explains his war tax proposal**

From CNN Associate Producer Martina Stewart

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Washington (CNN) – A leading congressional Democrat who is the chief proponent of a new tax that would fund future military operations in Afghanistan suggested Sunday that continuing to fight the Afghan war under current conditions is “a fool’s errand” and, at the same time, said that his tax proposal would create a sense of shared sacrifice that has been missing in the last eight years.

Rep. David Obey, a Democrat from Wisconsin, is expressing serious reservations about the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan - just days before President Obama is expected to announce a substantial increase in U.S. troops in the country.

“The problem is that you can have the best policy in the world, but if you don't have the tools to implement it, it isn't worth a beanbag,” Obey said on CNN’s State of the Union, “And I don't think we have the tools in the Pakistani government and I don't think we have the tools in the Afghan government. And until we do, I think much of what we do is a fool's errand.”

Although Obey praised the process the president has used to revamp military strategy in Afghanistan, the Wisconsin Democrat who is chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said his differing opinion of the war is caused by consideration of the country’s long term fiscal resources and needs.

“The Pentagon has only one job, and that's to talk about this war and this war only,” Obey told CNN Chief National Correspondent John King, “But [Obama] has, and I have jobs that require us to look at everything else that's tied into it. “I have to look at the entire federal budget, as chairman of the committee, for instance. I have to see what \$400 billion or \$500 billion, \$600 billion, \$700 billion, over a decade, for this effort, will cost us on education, on our efforts to build the entire economy. And - and when you look at it that way, I come to a different conclusion than [Obama] does.”

To fund continuing operations in Afghanistan, Obey has proposed what some observers are calling a “war tax.” The “Share the Sacrifice Act of 2010” would impose a one percent tax

increase on most Americans. Obey's proposal exempts service members who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001 along with families who have lost an immediate relative in either military conflict.

The point of the proposed new tax, Obey told King, is "in this war, we have not had any sense of shared sacrifice. The only people being asked to sacrifice are military families. They've had to go to the well again and again and again. And yet everybody else in society - you know, they're essentially told to go shopping by the previous president."

"I just think that, if this war is important enough to engage in the long term, it's important enough to pay for," Obey said Sunday.

Discussing the hundreds of billions of dollars that a possible long term commitment in Afghanistan could cost, Obey also linked funding the war to how President Obama and Democrats have chosen to pay for health care reform, one of the top Democratic policy initiatives in Obama's first year in office.

"We've been told for a year that we need to pay for every dollar that it's going to cost us to reform our health care system," Obey told King, "That's about \$900 billion over 10 years. If we wind up being committed in Afghanistan for eight to 10 years, that's also going to approach \$800 billion to \$900 billion. And if we're going to do that, it seems to me that if we're being told we have to pay for health care, we certainly ought to pay for this effort as well."

Original article is located [here](#) .